CLAIMS

1. A contents distribution system for distributing contents to clients of a user, wherein the user is capable of owning two or more clients, and each client legally uses the contents in compliance with an acquired license, said contents distribution system comprising:

registration means for registering each client of the user and acquiring customer-related information;

customer-related information management means for managing customer-related information;

contents supply means for supplying contents to a client in compliance with a request from the client;

license supply means for supplying, in compliance with a request from a client, a license for contents acquired from said contents supply means to the client who has acquired the contents; and

contents copy certificate supply means for supplying a contents copy certificate, which indicates a contents move from one client of the user to an other is legal, to a move source client.

2. The contents distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said contents copy certificate supply means generates a contents copy certificate that contains a license for a move destination client.

3. The contents distribution system according to claim 1, wherein the contents move source client and the contents move destination client are registered with different license supply means so that each license supply means supplies its own public key to the registered client, and wherein said contents copy certificate supply means electronically signs the contents copy certificate with a secret key of a license supply means with which the contents move destination client is registered.

4. The contents distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said contents copy certificate supply means acquires a license ID concerning the contents to be moved and the client ID of a move destination client from said contents move source client, sends an inquiry to said customer-related information management means to verify that the move source client is legal, and that the move source client has already acquired a license for the contents to be moved, and further that the user owning the move source client actually owns the move destination client, and then supplies a contents copy certificate.

5. The contents distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said customer-related information management means manages a table defining the association

between leaf IDs and client IDs, a table defining the association between client IDs and client public key certificates, a table defining the association between client IDs and user IDs, a table defining the association between contents IDs and license IDs, a table defining the association between user IDs and contents IDs of downloaded contents, a table defining the association between user IDs and license IDs of downloaded licenses, and a history of contents copy certificate issues.

6. The contents distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said customer-related information management means updates the customer-related information each time said contents supply means supplies contents to a client and/or each time said license supply means supplies a license to a client.

7. The contents distribution system according to claim 1, further comprising billing process means for performing a billing process on a client in accordance with a license supply and/or a contents copy certificate supply to the client.

8. The contents distribution system according to claim 5, wherein the amount billed by said billing process means for a license supply differs from the amount billed for a contents copy certificate supply.

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9. An information processing apparatus for using contents, comprising:

contents download means for downloading contents;

contents storage means for storing contents;

license acquisition means for acquiring a license for the use of contents;

contents reproduction means for legally-using contents with an acquired license;

contents copy certificate acquisition means for acquiring a contents copy certificate for moving contents; and

contents move means for attaching a contents copy certificate to contents stored in said contents storage means, moving the contents to an other device owned by the same user or acquiring contents to which a contents copy certificate is attached from an other device owned by the same user, verifying the validity of the contents copy certificate, obtaining a license, and storing the contents in said contents storage means.

10. The information processing apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said information processing apparatus registers at a license server to receive the license server's public key, wherein the contents copy certificate is electronically signed with the license

server's secret key, and wherein said contents move means uses the public key of said license server to check whether the contents copy certificate, which is attached to externally acquired contents data, is falsified.

11. An information processing method for using contents, comprising:

a contents download step of downloading contents;

a contents storage step of storing contents;

a license acquisition step of acquiring a license for the use of contents;

a contents reproduction step of legally using contents with an acquired license;

a contents copy certificate acquisition step of acquiring a contents copy certificate for moving contents; and

a contents move step of attaching a contents copy certificate to contents stored in said contents storage step, moving the contents to an other device owned by the same user or acquiring contents to which a contents copy certificate is attached from an other device owned by the same user, verifying the validity of the contents copy certificate, obtaining a license, and storing the contents.

12. The information processing method according to

claim 11, further comprising the step of registering at a license server and receiving the license server's public key, wherein the contents copy certificate is electronically signed with the license server's secret key, and wherein said contents move step uses the public key of said license server to check whether the contents copy certificate, which is attached to externally acquired contents data, is falsified.

13. A computer program written in a computer-readable form so that a process for supplying a license for the use of contents is performed on a computer system, wherein the user can own two or more clients and each client legally uses the contents in compliance with an acquired license, said computer program comprising the steps of:

acquiring a license ID concerning the contents to be moved from a contents move source client and the client ID of a contents move destination client;

judging that the contents move source client is legal, and that the contents move source client has already acquired a license for the contents to be moved, and further that the user owning the contents move source client actually owns the contents move destination client;

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creating a contents copy certificate; and

supplying the contents copy certificate to the
contents move source client.